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BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

The Rise and Decline of the Wheat-growing Industry in Wisconsin. By JOHN GRIFFIN THOMPSON. Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin. No. 292. Madison, Wis., 1909. 8vo, pp. 250. 50 cents.

This monograph aims to give an account of the wheat industry of Wisconsin, especially since 1850, by separate decades, which are made to serve as historical subdivisions for the discussion. In the preliminary chapters attention is called to the unique position of Wisconsin in the rapid rise and decline of wheat-growing, and to the general conditions existing in the state before the appearance of the railroads. In addition to this historical and statistical treatment of wheat-production by decades, we find in concluding chapters a discussion of the flouring industry in Wisconsin, and an account of the Milwaukee wheat market in the days of its greatest activity. The effect of the government's land policy on wheat-growing in Wisconsin, as well as in the other states of the West, and likewise the relations between the wheat-grower and the railroads, furnish other phases of the agricultural history of this state during the wheat-growing period. Many causes for the decline of wheat-growing are mentioned, such as declining profits, insect pests, the competition arising from diversified farming, and especially from tobacco and cereal crops. Much is attributed to dairying, for which the state is particularly adapted, as one of the chief activities that has gradually forced the wheat crop out of the state on to the less expensive western lands. The competition of these same western lands is of course mentioned as a factor making for the decline of the Wisconsin crop. It is then to the changing experience of this section of the former wheat belt, characteristic of many wheat-growing states, but more pronounced perhaps in Wisconsin, that our attention is called by this monograph.

Into this new territory began a steady flow of population in the late thirties and the forties. The settlers brought with them their former methods of agriculture, adapting these to the frontier. The wheat crop seemed best suited to this new country and the soil was favorable for its cultivation. The "persistent tendency to grow wheat exclusively" was due, we are told (p. 23), to the "scarcity of labor and capital on the one hand, and the great plenty and cheapness of fertile land on the other, together with the fact that wheat has always been a great cash crop." Facts not generally recognized were the tendency toward diversification in Wisconsin before 1850, pointed out by the author, and attributed to the "breakdown of the early home market"; and the evidence of crop failure and decline in yield prior to that date. This statement of conditions one cannot but feel is unduly emphasized. Surely the early settlers of Wisconsin could not have entertained very seriously the idea of a "home market" prior to 1850, or the belief that the demand of any home market, however effective, could absorb their increasing production.

We are told, however, that the coming of the railroads in the fifties

saved the situation; outside markets became accessible; new farm machinery was introduced; greater specializing in wheat followed with more rapid exploitation of the soil. The public land policy of the government, together with land-grant railroads, also emphasized "excessive specialization." Waste-fulness and speculation in growing land values was the order of the day. All conditions seemed to promote this one-crop system of agriculture. The peculiar dependence of the wheat farmer on the railroad, and the reliance of the railroads in turn on wheat traffic as a chief source of earnings resulted naturally in higher rates, discrimination, inadequate facilities, dissatisfaction, suspicion, and finally hostile legislation, in spite of the fact that in the railroad was found the only salvation for this expanding crop.

The Granger movement finds quite naturally a proper setting in this story, but little attention is given it. A fuller treatment, particularly of the Granger legislation in Wisconsin, would have been desirable if the relation of wheat-growing to the railroads, and the railroads to wheat-growing, was to be mentioned or discussed at all.

Other forces, in process of time, made for more diversified agriculture. The farmer became less dependent on the railroad to place his one crop on the market, and the railroad less dependent on the farmer's single crop for traffic, to the mutual benefit, we are told, of both parties.

The new agriculture of the state, the second stage, so to speak, which followed next after exclusive wheat-growing, was not what would be called specialized farming, but rather the general diversified raising of grain and live stock. Later, dairying began to be resorted to in a general way, developing more and more, however, as time went on, into the "characteristic farm industry." This was especially true in certain sections of the state. Dairying, we are told, required a higher degree of intelligence, renovated the soil, and proved far more profitable to the farmer. The tobacco crop, to a less degree, was also a factor in displacing wheat in some sections. With reference to this statement it must be remembered that the acreage devoted to tobacco, while rather large in two or three counties of the state, cannot be considered, however, a very serious encroachment upon what was formerly an extensive area occupied by wheat.

The final chapter deals with the probable future of wheat-growing in the state. Even in view of the large production of wheat in such states as Ohio and New York, the author's conclusions seem to furnish us little hope or prospect for any immediate or extensive revival of the crop in Wisconsin, due to other and more profitable branches of agriculture already firmly established.

An appendix of necessary and valuable data is added, consisting of some twenty-three tables and numerous charts and maps.

In reading this survey of Wisconsin's agricultural history, one gets the impression of severe and undue criticism of early farming methods in the state. The hardships and inherent difficulties of the new West and its agriculture cannot be traced entirely to a one-crop system. They are incident to the frontier. Here seems to be a tendency to judge early conditions in a new country from the more modern point of view. What is good sense and expedient today might not have been the wise policy then. Dairying, tobacco-raising, and mixed agriculture without doubt seem to be the proper programme for the

Wisconsin farmer of today, because such agriculture pays; but are we to suppose that the farmer of fifty years ago was less sensitive to his best economic interests in the raising of wheat? He raised wheat year after year because it paid him to do so. As Professor Daniells is quoted (p. 27): "Poor farming was the only profitable farming and consequently the only good farming; an agriculturo-economical paradox from which there is [was] no escape." There was a wheat-growing stage in the movement of civilization westward, and to question the wisdom of the prolonged part played by the Wisconsin farmer in it is as futile as to disparage the days of the hand loom. A better appreciation of economic evolution, in its relation to agriculture, would give full credit to the early wheat-raiser of the country and to the methods he employed.

On the other hand one regrets that a fuller and more detailed account was not given of the progress made in technical improvements in agricultural machinery during the period covered. This progress is a real and vital part of all modern agriculture. A similar criticism or suggestion might be made respecting a more thorough analysis of the effects of the panics of 1857 and 1873, and likewise of the Civil War, on the agriculture of the state and on wheat-raising in particular. Too much stress and credit, we are disposed to think, have been given to dairying as a substitute for wheat-raising, and not enough consideration to the various crops now so generally cultivated. Has adequate attention been given, some will ask, to the discouraging effects and general destruction of chinch bugs, etc., in limiting the crop within the state? Are not these things the real obstacles to wheat-raising, or the risk to which the farmer in Wisconsin is subject even today?

One other difference of opinion might be raised. After all was not the decline of wheat-growing in Wisconsin largely due to causes *outside* the state rather than to factors and forces working *within* the state? The state has been treated in this matter too much as an isolated economic community, and no state, similarly situated, can have an isolated economic development. And this leads us to our final comment: What is to be gained by such a study within purely artificial political state lines? It is doubtful whether the wheat belt can be satisfactorily studied by breaking it up into parts along the mere cleavage of state or county boundaries. Politically speaking, it may be desirable to know what Wisconsin has done at wheat-raising, but the subject, we think, has too broad an economic bearing to be treated within the confines of a single state.

With these limitations it is to be hoped, however, that a work, in *most* respects so generally satisfactory and so thoroughly carried out, may prove a substantial contribution to economics and history, and to the growing subject of agricultural economics in particular.

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Parenthood and Race Culture: An Outline of Eugenics. By CALEB W. SALEEBY. New York: Moffatt, Yard & Co., 1909. 8vo, pp. xv+389. \$2.50 net.

Any serious work on eugenics deserves to be taken very seriously. The reader who takes up for review this book by Dr. Saleeby has special reason to open it with expectant interest. If he has read the periodicals he will already have